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# **Social Capital in Scottish and Danish Neighbourhoods: Paradoxes of a Police-Community Nexus at the Front Line**

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## **Abstract**

Community-oriented social capital strategies and punitive-oriented policing approaches conflict. Establishing local networking initiatives with community-oriented policing at the centre lends itself to an assets-based policing approach, based on honouring, mobilizing and extending the assets of community members. Scholars argue about the need for comparative research on convergences and divergencies across sub-cultures on the streets and communities. Based on qualitative data gathered from working class communities in Scotland and Denmark in 2014, the article draws inspiration from community-generated theory of social capital to explore the micro-sociology of experiences and understandings about community-police integration policy initiatives. We use this perspective to argue that the building of positive inter-generational and police-community relationships is the result of social exchanges and officers' use of what we call 'constructive investment strategies'. Ironically, our insights from Scotland and Denmark also suggest what appear as positive achievements of community policing may instead intensify residents' negative perceptions of police officers and organisations. In this way, the article illuminates the tangled and conflicted nature of these embedded symbolic interactions, social capital formations and the latter's form as a potential positional and 'tribal' commodity.

**Keywords:** assets, communities, Denmark, policing, social capital, Scotland

## Introduction

This article explores how the establishment of community-oriented assets-based policing initiatives in Scotland and Denmark hold the potential to build social capital and to reconfigure historical hostile relationships between marginalised youth and the police. We chose to compare these two geographical contexts for a number of reasons. Scotland and Denmark have comparable populations of 5.3 million and 5.6 million respectively and similar levels of life expectancy. However, the two countries differ in terms of overall class and welfare distribution levels. While Scotland tends to have high levels of class and income inequality and poverty, Denmark (like other Scandinavian countries) generally has a high standard of living and is characterised by relatively low levels of class and income inequality and low poverty rates (von Hofer et al., 2012; Deuchar, 2018). Community police officers in Scotland have traditionally worked in close cooperation with local people and public and private agencies since the 1950s (Donnelly, 2010). Current policing principles (embedded in the *Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012*: section 32) emphasise the need for community engagement, the improvement of community and the overarching need to ‘prevent crime, harm and disorder’. Denmark also has a tradition of community-oriented policing, with an emphasis on ‘proximity policing’ embracing the need for officers to be more proactive rather than incident-driven and to form partnerships with residents and organisations (Holmberg, 2004).

Forman (2004, p. 2) argues that community policing aims to mobilise the resources within a community, and that ‘[c]ommunity policing rejects the discredited “warrior” approach to policing, in which inner-city communities were viewed as implacably hostile to the policing enterprise’. Researchers advocating community policing argue that this form of policing holds the potential to produce stronger and more viable communities and to enhance

cooperative behaviour with the police authorities (Kerley & Benson, 2000). While traditional approaches to community development have often used a focus on a community's needs and deficiencies as their starting point, 'assets-based' community development holds that improvements can be best achieved through a commitment to discover a community's capacities, through honouring, mobilizing and extending the assets of community members (Deuchar & Bhopal, 2017; Deuchar & Bone, 2015; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

In order to explore the intertwined relationship between community-oriented policing approaches - the prioritising of local assets and building of positive youth relationships -, this article draws theoretical inspiration from Putnam's (2000) community-generated theory of social capital. Putnam distinguishes between three basic forms of social capital: *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking*. *Bonding* social capital tends to be characterised by dense, multifunctional ties, localised trust and unity. *Bridging* social capital tends to be characterised by weak ties and thin levels of trust, but broadens identities and brings together people across diverse social divisions. The third dimension, *linking* social capital, is a particular type of bridging which enables people to forge alliances with authoritative organisations (such as the police). Putnam's analysis is not without its critics: Field (2012) for instance points out that Putnam overlooks social capital as a positional good, a source of power and advancement, as argued by Bourdieu. Social capital in Putnam's analysis also overlooks how inequalities affect the capacity to do the work required to build and maintain social capital (Patulny et al., 2015; Mithen et al., 2015).

To overcome such shortcomings, this study also draws upon Bourdieu's praxis-based conception of social capital defined as 'the product of investment strategies [...] aimed at

establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term' (1986, p. 248-249). We use this perspective to argue that the building of positive inter-generational and police-community relationships is the result of social exchanges and not least officers' use of what we call 'constructive investment strategies', aimed at creating dialogue with marginalised youth and mobilizing individual, associational and institutional assets. We propose that the theoretical concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' (Bourdieu, 1990) are useful to pursue how the different strategies used by police officers are shaped by their organisational positioning. Habitus refers to 'the way society [or organisations] becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' (Wacquant 2005, p. 316, cited in Navarro 2006, p. 16). The habitus is a social process that is unconscious; it can change over time, and particularly when actors engage in different social and organisational fields. The policy context of our lens indicates the desire to promote inclusive community ideologies. Accordingly, we were interested in exploring the potential links between the promotion of a community-oriented, assets-based police habitus, the generation of social capital and the promotion of positive youth-officer relationships and community wellbeing (Deuchar & Bhopal, 2017).

However, in attempting to explore the above issues we were mindful that the situation in both Scotland and Denmark also indicates that contradictory approaches are applied to the management of marginalised communities<sup>i</sup> and youth. Scotland has traditionally had a focus on penal welfarism within its youth justice system (Burney, 2009), and the devolved Scottish National Party (SNP) created a vision of a 'flourishing, optimistic Scotland' in which resilient communities, families and individuals live safe from crime, disorder and harm, and are encouraged to build upon the assets that they already have (Scottish

Government, 2015). However, punitive elements also crept into the criminal justice system as a result of the Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, and the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) (Burney, 2009). Furthermore, a substantial body of work has illustrated how relationships between young people and the police within deprived communities in Scotland, indexed by intergenerational unemployment and elevated levels of crime, have often been fraught with mutual distrust and stereotyping (Deuchar et al., 2015). In recent years, there has been huge controversy surrounding the increased use of what might be called a ‘warrior’ model of stop and search in Scotland (Murray, 2014). Although links between crime prevention and the use of stop and search have been used as justification by Police Scotland, research suggests young men feel discriminated against being disproportionately its target (Deuchar & Bhopal, 2017). Furthermore, critique has been raised that officers utilise criminal profile stereotypic scripts in making decisions about targeted stop and search activity (Duran, 2009), which can result in ‘othering’<sup>ii</sup> on the part of disadvantaged youth.

Similar to the situation in Scotland, empowerment and assets-based strategies, emphasising the importance of acknowledging residents’ involvement, are key elements in local and national policies aimed at improving the living conditions in marginalised neighbourhoods in Denmark (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2010). However, although police ideologies continue to emphasise the importance of ‘proximity policing’, localism and community engagement in policy papers and public discourses, such working methods have in practice been declining, in part as a result of recent structural reforms prioritising police centralisation, response time and clearing rates (Holmberg, 2004, 2014). Furthermore, within the context of the youth justice system, tougher laws and policies have been enacted (Balvig, 2005; Olesen, 2013). This is particularly pertinent within the context of ethnic

minority young people. In Denmark, evidence suggests that youth of ethnic minority background are particularly exposed to stop and search (Holmberg, 2003), that young minority groups have higher arrest rates without a subsequent conviction than those of ethnic Danish backgrounds (Holmberg & Kyvsgaard, 2003), and that encounters between marginalised minority men and the police are often characterised by antagonism and distrust (Wellendorf & Cakmak, 2007), which in turn indicates how ethnicity (and youth and gender) can become a 'site' of experienced othering or discrimination (Tripathi and Singh, 2016).

Cultures may have multiple 'others' depending upon socio-political context (Tripathi and Singh, 2016). In the late 1990s, the Danish State police developed a gang suppression approach aimed at 'neutralizing', 'pacifying' and 'isolating' gang members. This organisational policy has fuelled hostile and adversarial thinking among mainstream officers towards groups judged recalcitrant. Increased police use of stop and search methods targeting outlaw bikers as well as marginalised minority men believed to be part of 'street gangs' (see Volquartzen, 2009) or mere unruly (Wellendorf & Cakmak, 2007) suggests a 'warrior' policing mentality.

Whilst not having gang members in our sample, given that the two neighbourhoods that were the context for our empirical work were known to contain gangs, it was evident that their existence may impact on the perceptions of our sample. Signal theories of crime suggest violent criminality has collective impact on communities (Innes, 2014). Since Thrasher's (1927) seminal work on the concept of 'gang', consensus about it remains elusive. Badey (1988) divides street gangs into three types: formal gangs have a leader, core membership, and a geographical area under its control. Informal gangs are loose in



organisation led by charismatic leaders. Casual gangs are mainly male, often leaderless, by habit they socialise together, have home turf and plan crimes. Wortley (2010) argues that a gang shares ages, names, territory, insignia, rituals, initiation rituals, is violent and crime-oriented.

Drawing the above issues together, the key aims of our study were: to explore the extent to – and ways in which – nurturing a police habitus centred upon community-oriented ‘assets-based’ approaches to local policing may generate the type of social capital that lends itself towards enhanced local perceptions of youth-officer relationships and community wellbeing; and to consider the associated impact of local residents’ wider perceptions of policing in a more general sense. Our study adopted a qualitative approach to data collection in order to explore these issues, and the specificities of this are outlined below.

### **Empirical rationale and methods**

We deployed a comparative perspective on the situation in Scotland and Denmark, because this approach enabled us to highlight key similarities and difference in how cross-national policies promoting ‘assets-based policing’ (Paterson & Best, 2016) are being implemented and experienced. A standardised concept of community ‘is a collective of human beings that is more unified around networks of solidarity than a usual social association’ (Barzilai, 2012). As Barzilai (2012) argues, communities have cultures, identities and practices.

As highlighted above, we chose Scotland and Denmark because the two countries have comparable populations but are characterised by differing class and welfare distribution patterns. They also have comparable national crime rates, although it should also be noted that concern about youth street gangs is a relatively new phenomenon in Denmark whereas it

has been an issue of concern for many years in Scotland (Davies, 2013). In terms of police policies and approaches, as outlined in the Introduction, Scandinavia, including Denmark, has historically been considered and cited as comparable to the Scottish case (Terpstra & Fyfe, 2014). As an indication of this, both countries have recently seen the development of seemingly contradictory punitive and assets-based approaches to the policing of vulnerable neighbourhoods, as described earlier.

### *Sample characteristics*

We explored the social worlds of community networking initiatives. Through liaison with the Danish police and various other community outreach agencies in eastern Denmark, we identified one local community: *Norrebro* [in Danish: *Nørrebro*] in Copenhagen. This area has traditionally had a reputation for being a left-wing socialist community and is now a very multicultural district of Copenhagen, with a large concentration of first and second-generation immigrants of middle-eastern origin. While the area experienced an economic boom during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, from the 1970s onwards it has been characterised by high rates of unemployment (Schmidt, 2015). For many years, young male members of a local street gang became locked in a violent conflict with neighbouring gangs. Over time, these younger men – who were mostly from ethnic minority groups – began to wear hooded tops with gang emblems emblazoned on them, adorned gang-related tattoos and some occasionally intimidated local residents. Hence, a great deal of tension began to exist among local people towards ethnic minority young people (Torfing & Krogh, 2013). Public fear about youth crime and the demonisation of young ethnic minority males hanging around the streets have remained high, and tensions between residents and the police have continued to feature. In 2009, the police launched a new and experimental initiative called ‘Your Police Officer’ (*Din Betjent*) with the purpose of making the police more accessible to local

residents and to build more positive dialogue-based relationships with local marginalised youth (Torring & Krogh, 2013).

Through a similar process of intelligence-gathering via community outreach agencies and Police Scotland, we identified a local community on the outskirts of Glasgow: *Govan*. Similar to *Norrebro*, this community had experienced an economic and social boom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had a famous legacy as an engineering and shipbuilding centre of international repute. However, over the past 40 years, the area has developed a reputation for extreme poverty and deprivation as a result of deindustrialisation processes. The community has also for many years suffered from gang-related tensions and violence, with young (predominantly white) men dividing the socially deprived urban neighbourhoods into a patchwork of territories (Davies, 2013; Holligan & Deuchar, 2009).

In both neighbourhoods, community networking initiatives were in the process of being designed and subsequently implemented during the period of our data collection process. Our sample selection strategies required flexibility: first, we approached the prominent community-based officers (and in the case of *Govan*, a local entrepreneur who had been instrumental in establishing a social enterprise initiative designed to support community development and growth) - these participants had been involved in initially setting up the local community networking initiatives; second, we met with all members of the networks and issued participant information sheets about our proposed study in order to seek volunteers who might be willing to participate in interviews; third, we then met with those who were willing to participate individually and sought their informed consent before conducting the semi-structured interviews.

Throughout the first six months of 2014, we visited both communities to conduct an iterative series of 21 in-depth semi-structured interviews, each took up to 60 minutes. We conducted interviews with a small sample of representatives from the local neighbourhoods involved in the local networking initiatives. Semi-structured interviews with 12 participants in *Norrebro* were conducted: eight local people (three young people [who were also youth workers], two additional youth workers and three residents), three police officers and a local community worker (and former police officer). Of these, all of the young people and the two youth workers were from ethnic minority groups, while the remaining participants were ethnic Danes.

In *Govan*, we conducted semi-structured interviews with nine people involved with the local community network, specifically two local residents (including one young person who was also a local events assistant), one local councillor, one youth worker, one local social entrepreneur, one local artist and three community police officers. In the case of the *Govan* sample, all participants were white.

### ***Data analysis***

Transcription of the interviews was followed by a thematic data analysis process. First, an inductive approach to open and axial coding was drawn upon to identify the most salient themes. Second, overarching themes were interpreted in light of grounded theory, and the insights into social capital by both Putnam (2000) and Bourdieu (1986). Accordingly, our inductive approach to data analysis was interpretive where we privileged the voices of our research participants. In all cases, interviews were conducted in English. In the following sections, we present the comparative insights from the data under three main sub-themes, which emerged from the thematic coding. We use pseudonyms for participants throughout.

### **Theme 1: *Territoriality, disharmony and othering***

In *Norrebro*, residents referred to the fact that local people were very diverse in terms of their incomes and backgrounds, viewing this as a positive aspect while also recognising that these differences could create tensions. Many of the interviewees furthermore referred to the street violence that had taken place in recent years and the presence of gangs which had created a sense of insecurity among local people:

Some people who live in *Norrebro* are afraid from [gangs] ... [gang name] is made up of people from inside and outside *Norrebro* so a lot of people come in who are not locals ... they don't respect the locals so that creates a lot of tension. (*Hamza, local young person and youth worker, Norrebro*).

Some youth workers, police officers and local young people described gang culture as a problem for people growing up in their community; some adult residents felt unsafe and insecure. Bourdieu argues social capital is a resource that flows to individuals by virtue of membership of social networks (Field, 2012). The incursions described in the above extract interfere with the benefits that may accrue from local ties. Among the Scottish participants, some local people described *Govan* in a similar way as the participants from Denmark described *Norrebro*. For instance, the community was seen to be a vibrant and lively area with a proud history but at the same time a community that was changing in terms of its increasingly inter-cultural mix. Police officers expressed a view that the main challenge that local people in *Govan* had been presented with in recent years was youth disorder. Further, local residents in *Govan* described living there as challenging, due to the perceived anti-social behaviour among some young people and the impact that this had on older people:

Rowdy behaviour can sometimes be a problem ... They [young people] have got their “boom boxes” on and they’re thumping away. And it can’t be avoided because you live in tenements and you’re right next to each other (*Charlie, local resident, Norrebro*).

Putnam’s monolithic ‘one size fits all’ notion of social capital is challenged by generational difference: ‘rowdy behaviour’ may build the social capital of a young age group whilst seeming to threaten community capital cohesion as perceived by its mature residents. Particular examples of youth disorder were reported in relation to an annual fair that took place in the local community of *Govan*. Local people referred to ‘gang battles’, drug dealing and violent offences that had emerged in recent years. However, the youngest member of the local community believed that young people were stigmatised by older residents because of the behaviour of a minority of their age group:

There were groups of young people congregating outside of the gates. And you did see at times a bit of alcohol taking, you know, and because of that image that ... distorts a lot of people’s views of ... young people in general in *Govan* ... Even though they may not be involved in a gang at all, you know, because of growing up in *Govan* for so long, they’ll see a young group congregating and immediately have those assumptions. (*Julie, young person and events assistant, Govan*).

The above extract draws our attention to the ways in which, despite being ‘othered’ by the police and (in some cases) adult residents, groups of young people build a sub-cultural social capital. Accordingly, in both *Norrebro* and *Govan*, the historical issues associated with gang violence had clearly left a legacy of suspicion, labelling and fear, with a particularly strong inter-generational mistrust. An added inter-cultural distrust was also prevalent in *Norrebro*. Evidence suggests that both neighbourhoods suffer from the impact of discriminatory views of disadvantaged communities, but we need to become more aware of micro-sociological issues. Othering in this context appears to be projected through a

chronological age hierarchy within the same community. For instance, research from Scotland suggests that police use of stop and search targeting marginalised youth has increased distrust of the police within deprived communities (Burney, 2009; Deuchar et al., 2015). This is important, as victimhood may paradoxically intensify the social capital bonding among those subject to ‘warrior’ methods. Patulny et al. (2015) argued that participation in symbolic interactional rituals contributes to the development of social capital, these rituals form part of lifestyles.

The ways in which young people conduct their social life will shape the nature of the social capital generated by a lifestyle choice. Those affiliated with gangs or criminality may develop violence capital which may enhance reputation and forge social networks with likeminded peers (Deuchar, 2009; Holligan and Deuchar, 2015). In the case of the older residents, we conjectured that the emphasis of their social capital may connect with state authorities such as the police on whom they have a reciprocal relationship of trust and mutual support. This analysis illuminates that social capital in a community is not necessarily homogenous. It may be stratified by age and the orientation an age group has towards the social world. Older residents may have ties with police authority lying beyond the geographically bounded community while, in the case of the young people, their social capital may work to exclude others who are not members of their community, including the police and older residents. A corollary of this analysis is that within one geographic space, micro-communities co-exist, possibly in tension. The bonding social capital developed in relation to becoming a victim co-exists with the bridging social capital older residents develop with the police.

## **Theme 2: *Warriors, prejudice and conflict***

Interviews with police officers, residents and youth showed that both *Norrebro* and *Govan* were characterised by various modalities of policing as well as different local perceptions about the police ranging from antagonism to friendliness. In *Norrebro*, while the officers participating in ‘Your Police Officer’ stated that the aim of a community-oriented approach was to ‘break down some barriers’ between the local people and the police, residents and youth workers we interviewed expressed the perception that other branches of the police were not people-friendly in that their main concern was to strike hard at gang members and disorderly youth. In accordance with a survey organised by the police, showing that more than 20 % of the *Norrebro* residents did not believe that police would help them, when help was needed (Rigspolitiet, 2016), the resident informants in this study reported a general lack of trust in the police within the community. According to the informants, this was particularly pronounced among young people, as a result of response officers’ use of aggressive ‘confronting strategies’ towards gang members and disorderly youth in the local community:

Whenever there’s police in this area I feel tense, cause I know, shit, they’re gonna fuck something up, so there’s gonna be trouble ...they’re gonna make some kind of aggression and stuff, or something like that. ... I don’t feel very happy when I see the police here. Often you see them make very violent arrest. (*Tina, local resident, Norrebro*).

Others in the local community believed that mainstream use of confronting strategies used by mainstream officers who routinely respond to emergency calls was motivated by racism, and that young ethnic minority men were particularly stigmatised. In addition, local people made reference to ‘visitation zones’ that had been implemented during the gang conflicts some years earlier (Mørck et al., 2013). Since 2004, Danish police have been mandated with



legal ‘emergency’ tools to declare a specified area or an entire city a visitation zone, which enables police to make stop and searches without probable cause. In recent years, parts of or the entire *Norrebro* area have frequently been declared a visitation zone, often due to suspected gang violence. Among the local residents we interviewed, it was generally believed that these interventions were carried out more often with young people of colour:

And they have ... misused them [visitation zones] a lot, where they ... check the clothes ... of a young man, like, on the streets ... just because he’s brown, you know? (*Christof, local resident, Norrebro*).

The police (didn’t) know who was in the gang and who wasn’t and they stopped everybody ... like me, I’ve never been in a gang but two or three years ago I could be stopped every day. (*Anjoid, local young person and youth worker, Norrebro*).

In *Govan*, there were differing perceptions about policing between officers and local people. Several local officers highlighted the importance of the community policing approach and felt that officers invested in the building of positive relationships with local residents and young people. However, other research participants referred to the local annual Govan Fair – a festival involving residents and local agencies and businesses - that took place within the community and that there were tensions between officers and local people:

We had the police blaming the community organisers for not organising the [Fair] properly. We had the community organisers blaming the police for not policing [it] properly. (*Linda, local social entrepreneur, Govan*).

These different perceptions about the police suggest that distinctive contextual micro-sociological processes operate despite it being the same community. As with the ‘visitation

zones' in *Norrebro*, some of the participants in *Govan* also spoke about the aggressive use of stop and search by the police and the negative impact it had on relationships with youth. Although police officers appeared to have positive views about their work in the two communities - in both *Norrebro* and *Govan* - there were negative perceptions among local people which caused high levels of distrust and lack of positive collaboration between some police officers and local people. It is unclear, however, what it was about the micro-sociology of the different settings that gave rise to this negative perception about police authority. On the one hand, some residents are uncomfortable with younger residents and on the other hand young people feel disadvantaged by authoritarian State institutions.

### **Theme 3: *Bonding capital, dialogue and trust***

During the period of our contact with each of the communities, one or two local entrepreneurs had taken the lead in initiating local 'listening events' where local people and agencies came together to engage in collective discussion and where local community networks began to emerge. In the following, we describe the way in which the networks and the listening events had been initiated and the impact they were perceived to deliver.

Though a key aim of the police in *Norrebro* was to enhance local safety by enforcing a harsh ('warrior') approach on disorderly youth, in the late 2000s, the police increasingly also came to realise that their aggressive presence undermined residents' feelings of safety. In this context, and due to political pressure from the Mayor of Copenhagen, demanding that a community police unit was established in *Norrebro*, the police came up with the initiative called 'Your Police Officer' (Torfing & Krogh, 2013). As part of this initiative, selected officers were assigned the task of trying to build positive relationships of trust with residents. In this project, officers made use of a range of different 'constructive strategies':

walking around the neighbourhood, offering advice and guidance to local youth and helping residents resolve disputes. Through the use of such strategies, officers made investments in building positive relationships and social capital with residents.

In the early phases, one young community officer, Felix, played a key role in the design and implementation of the 'Your Police Officer' initiative. The main initial approach he adopted was to become visible in the community, building relationships and being prepared to learn from people living in these neighbourhoods. Another strategy used by this officer was to become personally involved, rather than insisting on the building of mere professional relationships. His habitus combined bridging and bonding social capital. This degree of commitment was strongly appreciated by local residents:

When Felix first came here to the local festival and things going on, people were like: "Wow – Felix was here with his family!" They thought it was a good thing to do. They were proud that Felix did that – they thought, "he means it". It wasn't just that he talked about wanting to know people, he actually did it ... it was a way of showing people he really feels something for this area ... it felt like the local police were back again. (*Jeana, local resident, Norrebro*).

Felix subsequently initiated and nurtured the emergence of a local community network, and - drawing on existing relationships he had established in the neighbourhood – slowly began to convince people that he was there to support them, that their voices could be heard and their positive assets recognised. The community network's membership comprised local social workers, members of School Boards, representatives from the Municipality, local residents and youth workers (who represented young people) with local young people also later joining the group. The network organised two large public meetings, where wider local residents of mixed ethnic background, young people and gang leaders came together to hear

about each other's perspectives. Monthly network meetings meant that mutual distrust and suspicion were beginning to break down:

I think there was about 400, 450 people ... the local gang leader attended and he also asked questions with a microphone to the panel, and some of the local youth were there, some of the ethnic mums were there ... I would say that ... [there's been] quite a big improvement in perception of safety in this local community. (*Felix, police officer, Norrebro*).

Supported and encouraged by Felix, members of the community network became involved in renovating a local community house that had been squatted in the early 1970s. More recently, it had become a magnet for gang members to congregate. Local seminars were regularly held in this venue. Members of the community network focused on building an open and inclusive approach where local residents (including young people) were involved in re-designing these premises. Furthermore, one participant described the way in which the network had initiated the setting up of a soup kitchen. The emergence and flourishing of the social capital connected with collective mobilising seemed to reduce local residents' fears about crime and violence. The local networking initiatives and listening events helped to create a safer and supportive environment among the locals:

We decided to do something to make people go into the streets, because one of the things we can do ... is to create spaces for safety ... the more people gather, and the more they gather outside their homes, the safer we all [people of the community] feel. (*Line, local resident, Norrebro*).

Police officers and youth workers from *Norrebro* represented the opinion of many participants from the respective networks when they referred to the importance of local people talking to each other, and the way in which the network created opportunities to break down barriers between generations:

Just talking ... I think it's one of the most important thing[s] ... Talking to them and saying "this is a bad way you're trying to go into the gangs and it's not good for you. What about get a job in the supermarket, what about school, I can help you with your homework?" (*Arno, police officer, Norrebro*).

A lot of other people in the community who have prejudices towards the youth ... barriers have broken down when they meet each other in those surroundings and those settings. (*Fahim, youth worker, Norrebro*).

However, the attempt to construct dialogue and consent between youth, the adult generation and police may also represent the use by the police of social capital as a mode of 'positional power', a term used by Bourdieu (1986). Although negative views about response officers remained, local youth workers expressed the view of many when they described the main officer who nurtured the initiation of the network in a totally different way:

He's not the same ... person as them ... [he] comes up for a cup of coffee and sits with us. He also does once a week. That builds a bond between him and the [young] guys. (*Mohammed, youth worker, Norrebro*).

In spite of the fact that the 'Your Police Officer' initiative won the European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA) in 2012, and that this initiative today is implemented in other Copenhagen areas and Danish cities, Felix and another officer (Jan) who supported Felix in his work with the network, described how their efforts faced daily difficulties. As such, Felix and Jan explained how other officers tended to see their approaches as a 'soft' way of doing police work and that they continually had to explain and legitimise the approach, especially in the early phases:

Not everybody finds it interesting ... that's my opinion, that it's a good way to work. But other people also in this police station think it's not a good way to work ... a lot of my colleagues think it's a soft way of tackling police work. (*Jan, police officer, Norrebro*).

Since many officers did not see community-oriented approaches as 'real' police work, Felix explained that it was at times difficult to recruit new dedicated members. Furthermore, Felix also stated that he felt that the continued dominance of 'get tough on crime' approaches within the broader police force, along with notions that community policing represented 'soft' and ineffective policing undermined the productive and collaborative work he was doing. Since our data collection in 2014, the punitive streak, along with a severe escalation in gang feuding including random shootings in the streets, have led to a situation where community-style policing has to some extent been replaced by enforcement approaches. This at least is how some residents see it (Lauridsen, 2017). As an indication of this shift, *Norrebro* was in the summer of 2017 yet again declared a visitation zone and constantly patrolled by heavily armed officers making extensive use of stop and search methods. Furthermore, a police helicopter was circulating the area after dark to ensure a swift and forceful response to put an end to the gang shootings (Hvilsom, 2017).

In *Govan*, as in *Norrebro* during the time of our data collection, two officers had also invested in nurturing a focus on bringing agencies and people together with an emphasis on listening and focusing on collective local assets:

[We] knew ... that what we wanted was a partnership. And it was how to achieve that partnership. So we then tried some early listening events, introducing it to partner agencies mainly in the third sector ... introducing them to aspects of an assets-based approach and identifying the people in the community ... that could help us and want to do things for their community, enhance the pride ...

getting the community support and getting them to use what they can to make things better. (*Jason, police officer, Govan*).

The aim of the *Govan* network was to support and empower the local community by using their own skills and talents and to promote positive relationships by focusing on collective community-wide assets. The organisation of the annual *Govan* Fair was seen as a potential conduit for bringing about increased inter-community collaboration. As described earlier, in recent years the Fair had become blighted by conflict between local gangs, and this had created increased tensions between the police, local residents and young people. However, by bringing local people, the police and the organisers of the 2014 Fair together in local ‘listening events’, the community network was able to galvanize extensive community support to plan the festival from a new collaborative angle. This implied that control for the planning of events during the Fair was handed over by the local police to the residents’ festival committee. Furthermore, community police officers began to adjust to their new role as facilitators of social capital.

The officers agreed to train local residents as marshals and stewards for the big annual event and instead of flooding the local area with high visibility police officers, local people were given vests and trained on the art of crowd control and traffic management. Importantly, this can be seen as an example of how mainstream officers’ adaptation of more community-oriented roles and perspectives can result in changes in officers’ practices where their traditional use of ‘confronting investment strategies’ are gradually replaced by more constructive relationship-building strategies. According to the local people who participated in our interviews, a positive contagion spread before, during and after the Fair, which resulted in a completely different type of event from the one experienced over the last few years:

The police service were constantly patrolling. But it wasn't in a manner perceived as threatening in any way. They were going through the crowd, engaging with people. You know, in a very conversational tone, you know? Everything was very much friendly, you know... whereas in the past... you would merely see police, you know, patrolling, walking past. Neither side would say anything to each other... very much a sense of enforcement. (*Julie, young person and events assistant, Govan*).

As in *Norrebro*, during the time of our data collection, the police officers involved in the *Govan* initiative felt that the approach they were using was not widely acknowledged or encouraged in the wider force. In line with this, the residents who we interviewed indicated that distrust towards other members of the police remained in *Govan* due to the continued use of enforcement strategies such as stop and search:

I am quite against stop and searching mainly because the main reasons why, in the first place, the police and the community have not been getting on is not necessarily because of what's been happening or any real activity, it's because of perception. And with stop and search this, this recreates this perception of say young people who walk round with a hoody or who look in some way menacing when they're just going about their daily lives, you know? (*Julie, young person and events assistant, Govan*).

Within the context of the views put forward, it appeared that the innovative approaches adopted by the individual officers in both *Norrebro* and *Govan* redefined their relationships with local people, facilitating the building of trust and community safety. In both *Norrebro* and *Govan*, our interviewees indicated that they believed that local people were encouraged to recognise and mobilise their own skills and capacities. Renovation, regeneration and re-positioning of traditional buildings and customary celebrations mattered. They further stated that public meetings and inclusive associations brought people together beyond social and cultural divides. This emphasised solidarity with the 'othered'. Labelling processes began to



dissipate. While in *Norrebro*, this focus emerged through extended invitations being offered to young people (including gang members) to participate in public forums, in *Govan*, ‘listening events’ enabled the police to trust and hand over responsibility to the community enabling a greater sense of pride and achievement around the organisation of the local annual Fair.

### **Concluding discussion**

The purpose of our research was to explore the perceptions and experiences of those who are active in communities as workers and often residents. We traced patterns of relationships involving the police and some members of the communities in *Norrebro* and *Govan* through concepts of social capital. We recognise that our chosen sample was small, and that there were limitations in the range of perspectives and insights we could gain from this. Whilst participants (young people, local residents, police officers and youth and community workers) might not necessarily be representative of other facets of experience in the community, their personal and professional immersion in the topics covered in this study means they are nevertheless credible authorities. Their status as knowledgeable informants about the areas is therefore compelling. The focus on ‘primacy of local definition, investment, creativity, hope and control’ (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 8) appeared to enable greater trustful relationships and social cohesion to emerge, and positive external messages to be projected about the communities. We propose that local constructions of residents’ feelings of empowerment, the overcoming of stereotyping and processes of ‘othering’ and the nurturing of flourishing communities are dependent upon the building of social capital. Social capital is defined by the ‘rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity, and by trust embedded in social relations, social structures and societies’ institutional arrangements’ (Moser, 2006, p. 6).

Our data suggest that both *Norrebro* and *Govan* were initially characterised by deficits of reciprocity and trust among young people, police officers, residents and members of local organisations. Although we saw glimpses of movement towards a more cohesive community, our study and data prevent us from claiming these changes are pervasive and endured. In fact, in *Norrebro*, the recent escalation in gang feuding has resulted in an intensification of police ‘warrior mentality’ and the use of confronting strategies. This has left little room for community-style policing, as police managers prioritise enforcement approaches as immediate means of stopping the shootings (Hvilsom, 2017; Lauridsen, 2017).

However, our study does provide cues and insights, which can be useful in other contexts experimenting with assets-based policing. First of all, our study indicates that while some mainstream officers’ ‘punitive police habitus’ can represent a key obstacle to the building of positive police-resident relationships, this habitus can start to change as they participate in alternative ‘fields’, such as community-oriented policing, where the contexts demand a change in existing dispositions, enabling an assets-based approach. Secondly, our study also indicates that a key component of the (relative) success of such community-oriented approaches was police officers placing emphasis on what was already present, and not absent, in the local neighbourhoods. In both *Norrebro* and *Govan*, local networks were created that enabled some initial *social bridges* to be built between diverse individuals and organisations and for increased trust to lead to wider forms of *social glue* between these previously antagonistic groups (Lang & Hornburg, 1998). In Putnam’s terms, *bridging* social capital began to emerge, where meetings, projects and networking events brought people together across diverse social divisions, such as youth workers and residents collaborating with social entrepreneurs, artists and police officers. In terms of *linking* social

capital, it was evident that the visibility and community-centred focus of officers such as Felix and Jason helped to redefine their relationships with local people and to break down barriers, suspicion and tension within the community networks.

In addition, our study showed that the positive amelioration that surrounded the networking projects in both communities did not radically impact on residents' perception of the police in general, as lingering distrust of and negative perspectives about mainstream officers remained. In fact, our findings suggest that residents' positive experiences with 'community officers' can unintendedly come to reproduce or even strengthen negative perspectives on 'mainstream' officers and the police organisations. This because the latter are recurrently constructed in opposition to community officers in youth narratives.

Against this background, we argue that the building of personalised police-resident relationships is crucial to the success of community policing. Community officers must also function as 'cultural brokers' who prioritise the building of bridges and understandings between residents and other branches of the police. This can be done through active engagement with residents' prejudice or misconceptions of mainstream officers and vice versa, and by facilitating dialogue-based meetings between residents and mainstream officers. Fostering positive police-community relations also requires changes within the police organisation and in the practices of front-line officers. Drawing upon Bourdieu (1990), Chan (1997) argues that the policing *field* represents the structural conditions of police work which emerge against the backdrop of specific social and political contexts, while *habitus* refers to the cultural knowledge and system of dispositions that characterise practical policing. Although structural conditions are important, they do not completely determine cultural knowledge or practice of front-line officers. Even although, theoretically,

the policing *field* had come to embrace a focus on community-oriented perspectives and prevention in both Denmark and Scotland, the limited evidence from our interviewees suggested that the dominant ‘police habitus’ in marginalised and gang-affected urban spaces continues to be characterised by conservative ideology and an adversarial ‘warrior’ mentality.

However, as Chan (1997) argues, individual frontline officers must be viewed as active decision-makers, not passive entities, and some will adopt the dominant organisational *habitus* while others will not. Officers like Felix and Jason clearly had a huge commitment to enabling creative forms of engagement, interaction and integration, and appeared to reject the dominant punitive police *habitus*. Insights from our interviews suggested that the wider policing *field* within Felix’s and Jason’s two forces was still dominated by a view of ‘real’ police work as enforcement. In order to minimise the fragility of community policing efforts and local network building, which at times rely on a few innovative officers working alone, we recommend that Danish and Scottish policing policy and organisations become more attuned to how they can support the work of community-assets-oriented officers and more generally the nurturing of local integration networks. This would require a focus on the benefits of a community assets approach, also in times of violent outbreaks, and a coordinated programme of professional development for community workers, including the police.

However, local contexts of symbolic interaction require more recognition in terms of the unseen rituals that may play out in them. There is a need to guard against a homogenising notion of social capital that disadvantages some whilst creating for others positional power. Instead of generalisations, we need to disaggregate the different layers of communities to a

greater extent in order to understand the barriers and facilitators of social capital that levers an optimum outcome for all residents. For instance, the creation of positive relationships with some sections of police might unintentionally lead community members to view other sections of the police negatively. The promotion of community-assets-oriented policing approaches in supposedly marginalised neighbourhoods requires an eye for complexity and committed efforts to change the culture of policing toward one focused on community assets. That said, circumspection is essential lest we fall into the trap, through our use of terms like ‘marginalised communities,’ of stigmatising them through discourse.

We must also acknowledge the problematical nature of ‘community assets’: it is not self-evident within which groups such material lies dormant. Nor is it sufficiently specified what an asset happens to be in different situations, which in turn has consequences for our ability to judge whether assets are depleting or accumulating. In the words of one of our local participants, it is only through such a culture change and recognition of the benefits of a community-assets-approach that more officers will feel willing, able and confident enough to nurture community assets and social capital to enable local people to truly feel that ‘the local police are back again’. The shedding of a ‘warrior’ mentality needs to become more widespread if the provisional benefits we saw are to thrive. Some community members and workers may perceive the police as an establishment whose overriding interest is the enforcement of a punitive approach. To better community relations, this belief requires deconstruction through action on the ground, otherwise the social capital that ought to be fostered with citizens will retain its fragility.

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<sup>i</sup> Conceptually, we coalesce marginality and disadvantage with deprivation. Deprivation refers to a lack or absence of a resource or opportunity regarded as essential for inclusion in a basic standard of living. Indices of its multiple forms include safety, education, unemployment and health (Castree et al., 2013).

<sup>ii</sup> Othering refers to the perpetuation of prejudice, discrimination and injustice through deliberate or inadvertent means. The “other is often the construction of and by the powerful...it converts into a generalised stigma” (Tripathi et al., 2016, p. 10). To other is to ignore the complexity of persons and fuel exclusion. Criminal justice can provoke othering.